



children



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WHY FOCUS ON CHILDREN?

Pound for pound of body weight, children eat more food, drink more water and breathe more air than adults. Consequently, they may be exposed to higher levels of contaminants in our environment as well. Children's normal activities such as putting their hands in their mouths or playing on the ground create opportunities for exposures to contaminants that adults do not face.

To help children develop to their full potential, Governor Frank O'Bannon launched the Building Bright Beginnings Campaign. IDEM teamed up with several other agencies and has launched a multi-media program called "Protecting Children from Environmental Threats." This program is on-going and has several different components.

CHILD CARE VIDEO

One component of IDEM's campaign to improve children's environmental health is working with 100,000 Hoosier children through the Indiana 5-Star Environmental Recognition for Child Care Facilities. This program recognizes child care facilities that go above and beyond environmental health and safety issues. Several outreach materials have been developed to help promote this program which includes a guidance manual and self-assessment booklet.

IDEM has now entered the second phase of this program with the development of a training video, titled "Protecting Children from Environmental Threats, Guidance for Indiana's Child Care Facilities." This 25-minute training video illustrates how child care providers can educate staff and families on potential environmental health risks. The video was sent to every child care facility which currently participates in the 5-star child care program.

SAFER FAMILIES FOR 2000

Lead can prevent a child from developing to his or her full potential. Research has demonstrated that childhood exposure to lead at unsafe levels can cause learning disabilities, decreased growth, hyperactivity and brain damage. In pregnant women, lead exposure can pass through the body to the unborn child and result in birth defects or miscarriage. Lead may be found in dust, both interior and exterior paint, glazed pottery or crystal from other countries, drinking water, pipes and soil.

IDEM, in conjunction with the Indiana State Department of Health, the Marion County Health Department and other Indiana

health departments, provided families and child care facilities with free lead risk assessments and educational outreach materials. Since February 1998, IDEM has trained more than 100 lead assessors who have performed over 1,300 lead assessments at homes and child care facilities throughout Indiana. Assessors identified areas where children may be at risk of lead poisoning, promoted awareness of the lead risks and educated families on ways to prevent lead poisoning.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM)

IPM is a system of managing pests by using a series of appropriate alternative pest management options such as better sanitation, improved maintenance and mechanical controls and the use of less-toxic substances such as gel baits and stations.

Several common pests can threaten children's health by spreading diseases, triggering asthma attacks and allergies, or by stinging and biting children. Traditional methods for treating pests include preventative, residual insecticides. These products kill the insect on contact and work by leaving a residue that can last for several days, weeks or months.

IDEM has recently awarded a pollution prevention grant to the Purdue University Department of Entomology in cooperation with Indiana University, the Indiana State Chemist's Office and other knowledgeable professionals with experience in integrated pest management. Together, a pilot program has been developed to educate schools and child care facilities on the importance of implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Through this grant, on-site assistance is being provided to three schools and four child care facilities participating in the pilot program. Free workshops for school administrators and child care directors are being held throughout Indiana. To date, IDEM has conducted seven integrated pest workshops in partnership with Indiana University, Purdue University, the Indiana State Chemist's Office and other knowledgeable professionals. The workshops have trained over 150 individuals.



Research shows that children may be more sensitive to pesticide exposure than adults. Their growing bodies take in more food and water per pound of body weight than do adults. Also, young children are more likely to encounter pesticide residues by crawling, exploring or hand-to-mouth activity.



One in 13 children suffer from asthma – about five million children in the U.S.

The most rapid rise in asthma has occurred in children under age five — an increase of over 160 percent.

Asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism in the United States with over 10 million missed school days per year.

TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS

Poor indoor air quality has been linked to illness and absenteeism in schools. The quality of the indoor air can either impede or assist a school in meeting its core mission – educating students. To assist schools, IDEM has joined the U.S. EPA to help provide guidance for schools to improve their indoor air quality through a program called Tools for Schools.

The indoor air quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools action kit shows schools how to carry out a practical plan of action to improve indoor air quality at little or no cost using common sense approaches and in-house staff. The kit contains: checklists, background information, a unique indoor air quality problem-solving wheel, video training tapes and to schools that implement the program, IDEM is providing an incentive mini grant of \$200.00. IDEM will also be sponsoring indoor air quality workshops that will be held throughout the state during 2001.

ASTHMA

Asthma accounts for the leading chronic lung disease in children of the United States and is the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness.

In 2000, IDEM developed an asthma work group with internal and external partners. The workgroup is working to identify where asthma rates are high in Indiana and develop a plan to provide information to asthmatics on where environmental exposures can and should be avoided.

MERCURY AWARENESS PROGRAM (M.A.P.)

IDEM worked through regulatory and non-regulatory means to monitor for mercury in the environment, to prevent additional mercury from being released to the environment, to clean up mercury contamination and to increase awareness about the dangers of mercury when improperly disposed. In an unprecedented cooperative action, IDEM and the Indiana Regional Household Hazardous Waste Task Force worked with Indiana Solid Waste Management Districts, communities and businesses to accomplish a wide range of mercury reduction efforts.



www.in.gov/idem/mercury.html

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

As part of IDEM's continuing efforts to protect children's health, the agency has renewed efforts to educate children about the environment around them. IDEM continues to work with educators across Indiana on a variety of educational programs. In addition, IDEM hired its first environmental education coordinator for agency activities and will be developing an environmental education plan for the agency.

The Learning and Environmental Awareness Partnership (Project LEAP) provides free environmental education materials to Indiana students and educators with the goal of increasing environmental awareness and stewardship. During the past year, Project LEAP has grown to 875 educational partners and 26,250 students who use LEAP in their classrooms. IDEM also works to provide a wide range of learning opportunities.

Each year for one week in April, IDEM volunteers fan out across Indiana to teach young Hoosiers about the environment as part of Indiana's Earth Day celebration. In 2000, IDEM staff spoke to more than 10,000 students. IDEM also works to educate parents and children through outreach programs at special events like health fairs, environmental festivals and the Indiana State Fair.



Over 4,500 pounds of mercury and mercury-containing devices recycled since October 1998.



More than 3,500 mercury thermometers exchanged for free digital thermometers.



Thirty Indiana schools are participating in a mercury free pledge program.

